

Response to Comments Document

Mill Creek Sediment TMDL for a Benthic Impairment, Shenandoah County, Virginia

Introduction

A final public meeting was held for the Mill Creek benthic TMDL on March 21, 2006. The draft TMDL report (Mill Creek Sediment TMDL for a Benthic Impairment, Shenandoah County, Virginia) was presented at the meeting and made available on the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) website. A public comment period on the draft TMDL report was held from March 21, 2006 until April 20, 2006. During the public comment period, comments were received from Nesha Mizel and Charles Lunsford of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The submitted comments are presented below, followed by DEQ's response.

Comments Submitted by Nesha Mizel and Charles Lunsford (DCR)

Comment 1

Section 1.2.2: In describing the possible stressors, it is stated that there is no dominant source of nutrients, organic matter or sediment; however, shortly afterward, it is stated that livestock access to streams and lack of riparian vegetative cover appear to be the major sources of stress on the benthic community in Mill Creek. The first statement could be better clarified (e.g. No dominant stressor was determined).

Response

DEQ made the suggested revision.

Comment 2

Section 1.2.2, 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence: Sentence makes no sense to a lay person and since there is no explanation of its relevance I suggest that it be deleted.

Response

DEQ deleted the sentence in question.

Comment 3

Table 1.2: This table would be more clear if you put a statement in the text explaining that Hepner Blocks is the only permitted point source in the watershed.

Response

DEQ revised the text to clarify that wasteload allocations were developed for the one permitted industrial stormwater facility (Hepner Block) and the 8 single-family home general permits in the watershed.

Comment 4

Section 1.2.7: It is stated that changes in future land use distribution were judged to be minimal. It would be helpful to have a sentence explaining how you arrived at this conclusion (previous census data etc.)

Response

DEQ added language clarifying that the decision to assume only minimal changes in future land use was based on discussions at stakeholder meetings.

Comment 5

Section 1.3.1: Since Crooked Run appears to be a significant contributor of sediment to Mill Creek, it might be a good idea to include a monitoring station on the stream in future monitoring plans for the TMDL.

Response

DEQ will continue to sample Crooked Run as part of the routine monitoring network. In addition, Crooked Run will be included in follow-up monitoring plans developed for Mill Creek at the time of TMDL implementation.

Comment 6

Section 1.3.3: A significant emphasis is placed on 319 funding for implementation. This paragraph should be re-worded to consider all funding sources equally. It is suggested that the first sentence be deleted and next sentence be revised to read, "Funding programs that address nonpoint sources of pollution include the ...". Section 319 could be included with the funding programs.

Response

DEQ made the suggested revision.

Comment 7

Page 30: It is stated that all benthic samples in Mill Creek have shown abundant and diverse populations inconsistent with sources of toxicity. This statement implies that there is not a problem with the benthic community in Mill Creek. It would also be helpful to include a more finite conclusion in this section stating that toxics were removed from the list of possible stressors.

Response

DEQ revised the draft report to clarify that toxics were removed from the list of possible stressors based on abundant benthic populations and a lack of chemical data supporting toxics as a stressor. The statement regarding benthic samples was limited to abundance, since some measures of diversity have contributed to the impaired rating.

Comment 8

Page 60: The website link for tributary strategy is no longer valid (SNR website has been revised with the changes in the SNR positions). The valid link is <http://www.snr.state.va.us/waterquality/finalizedtribstrats/shenandoah.pdf>

Response

DEQ corrected the link as suggested.

Comment 9

Section 6.4.2: It would be helpful to provide a description of transitional land use so that it is more clear which category it falls under in the TMDL Load Allocation Scenarios in Table 7.3.

Response

DEQ made the suggested revision.

Comment 10

Section 8.4.3: Why is there language regarding MS4 permits when there are no such permits in the TMDL?

Response

DEQ removed this section from the report.

Comment 11

Friends of the North Fork could be mentioned under public participation including the mass mailing to promote the final public meeting that they funded and conducted.

Response

DEQ made the suggested revision.